THE DRIVER DEMERIT POINT WARNING LETTER

FOCUS GROUP TESTING OF ALTERNATIVE LETTERS

FINAL REPORT

SAFETY COORDINATION
& DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Ontario
Ministry
of
Transportation

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Focus Group Testing of Alternative Letters

Final Report

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ABSTRACT OF FINDINGS

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This study was conducted in March 1989 among 85 Ontario drivers, none of whom had more than five demerit points. The respondents were divided into fourteen small groups of approximately six individuals. Each set of groups was selected to represent different segments of the driving population -- in terms of age, sex, educational achievement or vocational driving. Hence the nature of findings is based on qualitative evidence to which statistical tolerances cannot be applied.

Each group reacted to the current warning letter and to four alternative versions shown. The basic conclusions are summarized as follows:

- While there is no compelling need to revise the current warning letter, it does have perceived weaknesses -- overly formal and lacking in positive motivation to improve driving habits.

- The balance between "threat" and "intimacy" or perceived softness in tone is a key factor governing reactions to the letters. In these terms, the overall best alternative is letter number 4.

- Consistency in reactions to the letters among different driving segments is in evidence.

But there is a different mental set between those more likely to receive such a letter (younger males) and other drivers. The younger male resents aspects of threat because this strikes too close to home. Other drivers for whom receipt of a letter is seen as a more remote possibility, see threat as warranted.

- While the number 4 letter is best among those submitted, a further letter was developed and exposed to some of the latter groups. It was drafted based on reactions from earlier groups, with positive reactions. Specifically:

  - contained on one page;

  - identification of the recipient by Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____;

  - inclusion of positive reinforcement to encourage better driving;

    ... and, an explanation of why the letter is being sent.

- There is no evidence that any of the letters is below the level of comprehension of lower educated drivers. What they do need is simplicity in sentence construction.

- By way of background, the demerit point system is:

  - seen as worthwhile, albeit in terms of short-term effects on driving behaviour. For the implicitly poor driver, other procedures are seen as necessary; more stringent testing, a program of retesting, or more forceful administration of penalties;

  - lacking in detailed awareness of the program. A need for public communication is advocated by respondents.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Background

Post-licensing driver improvement programs are broadly used in North America. Virtually all include some form of punitive action for those whose driving behaviour requires this.

In Ontario, the issuance of advisory warning letters has been part of the program since 1959. The main functions of these letters are to:

-- serve as an advisory by notifying drivers of their demerit point status;

-- provide an intermediary "threat" by indicating to such drivers that authorities are aware of their demerit points to date; and

-- encourage more careful driving in future, with the hope of improvement in driving behaviour to prevent further action being taken.

The essence of the current Ontario demerit point system may be summarized as follows:

at 6 demerit points -- issuance of a warning letter;

at 9 demerit points -- requirement of an interview with the driver;

at 15 demerit points -- licence suspension.

... Demerit points remain on the driver's record for a period of two years, following the date of the offence, following which they are erased.

The three tables to follow summarize data made available by The Ministry. It is useful background for this study by way of describing the occurrence of demerit points according to certain characteristics of the driving population. Specifically these are sex, age and also region of Ontario (North and South). The data is based on Ontario drivers for years 1985, 1986 & 1987.

There are several points worth noting from this data:

- A profile of the 17 per cent of drivers currently having demerit points clearly indicate that:

  -- men are more likely to fall into this group than women;

  -- probability of demerit points decreases with age. More specifically, younger males (ages 16 to 24) have a probability of having demerit points over twice their occurrence in the driving population. No other group approaches this level. It is worth noting, however, that the 25 to 44 age group, although close to parity in terms of

receiving demerit points, are important simply because they account for almost half of total drivers.

-- there is no distinction between North and South regions with respect to the probability of receiving demerit points.

(Reference Table 1.1)

- The remaining tables examine the occurrence of demerit points according to the number of points issued, and action taken. Essentially, similar conclusions are reached:

  -- while the 16 to 24 age group accounts for 15 per cent of drivers, 28 per cent have demerit points on their record, and 10 per cent have more than five points. Among men, accounting for 58 per cent of drivers, there are 22 per cent with one or more demerit points, and 6 per cent having more than five points. These figures compare to all drivers, of whom 17 per cent have any demerit points, and 4 per cent of whom have over five.

  (Reference Table 1.2)

  -- Among drivers to whom action has been taken, 80 per cent have received a warning letter, 7 per cent an interview and 13 per cent both. It is the younger male who continues to show above-average incidence of receiving a

warning letter. The remaining two categories under action taken (interview only or both warning letter and interview) tend to be clustered more among older driver ages 25 and over.

(Reference Tables 1.2 & 1.3)

Table 1.1

Demerit Point Data — Ontario Drivers - 3 Years 1985 to 1987

	(7.28MM) Per Cent Of Driving Population	(1266.9M) Per Cent Of Those With Demerit Points
	(100)	(17)
	%	%
Per Cent Of Driving Population		
Total	100	100
Male	58	75
Female	42	25
16 - 24	15	23
25 - 44	48	52
45 - 64	25	20
65+	12	5
South	91	92
North	9	8
Male 16 - 24	8	18
Female 16 - 24	7	5

Table 1.2

Ontario Drivers Distribution By Demerit Points — Years 1985 to 1987

Base: 7.28MM Drivers

	Per Cent	None	1-5	6-8	9-14	15+
Total	100	83	13	3	1	*
Male	58	78	16	4	2	*
Female	42	90	9	1	*	*
16 - 24	15	72	18	6	3	1
25 - 44	48	81	14	3	1	*
45 - 64	25	86	11	2	*	*
65+	12	93	6	1	*	*
South	91	83	12	3	1	*
North	9	83	13	3	1	*

* Less than 1 per cent.

Table 1.3

Distribution Of Drivers Receiving Warning Letters, Interviews — Over 3 Years 1985 to 1987

Base: 467.1M

	Per Cent Of Drivers	Letter Only	Interview Only	Both	
Distribution		80	7	13	
Per Cent Of Grand Total					
Male	(58)	66	6	11	= 83%
Female	(42)	15	1	1	= 17%
16 - 24 Male	(8)	24	1	2	= 27%
16 - 24 Female	(7)	6	*	*	= 7%
25 - 59	(74)	47	5	9	= 61%
60+	(11)	3	*	*	= 4%
South	(91)	76	5	10	= 91%
North	(9)	7	1	1	= 9%

* Less than 1 per cent.

The Objectives Of This Study

The Ministry has developed four alternative warning letters which they wish to appraise toward consideration of choosing one of them, or possibly some combination thereof, as a replacement for the existing warning letter.

Driver reactions are required, with emphasis on their subjective, qualitative reactions, with particular reference to:

- -- the degree of perceived threat, and whether in fact some component of "threat" is desirable or not;
- -- the style in terms of a more personalized versus formal approach;
- -- logistical consideration, including ease of comprehension, perceived length of the letter;
- -- the overall effectiveness of the letters as perceived. For the purposes of this study, effectiveness has been defined as the expected ability of a given letter to contribute to improved driving behaviour.

Given the data reviewed earlier in this study, it was considered desirable to conduct the research among all defined sections of the driving population, specifically according to sex, age group and also region (North and South).

Methods

During March, 1989, a series of "mini-groups" were conducted in Toronto and Sudbury. A total of 85 drivers participated, with approximately six respondents in each group.

A total of 14 such groups were conducted, representing a total of 7 different segments of the driving population. Each of these segments, as described below was replicated by conducting two groups.

Segments (2 groups each):

Younger men -- ages 18 to 34
Younger women -- ages 18 to 34

Older men -- ages 35 to 59
Older women -- ages 35 to 59

Those who use their vehicle primarily for vocational purposes -- to assess whether this has bearing on reactions to the letters.

Higher education -- mixed sexes
Lower education -- mixed sexes
-- to examine the issue of literacy in relation to written communication.

An original plan to conduct two additional groups among those with poorer driving records (having 6 to 14 points) was not feasible because of difficulties in generating respondent names and addresses from Ministry files.

All respondents were required to currently have a valid driving licence which is not under suspension. Only respondents with five or fewer current demerit points were selected for the research.

In recruiting the age of drivers, a reasonable spread was obtained among younger drivers (18 to 24 and 25 to 34) and older drivers (35 to 44 and 45 to 59).

Most of the groups (12) were conducted at facilities in Toronto. The remaining two were convened in a hotel in Sudbury.

All respondents were obtained by professional recruiters, using the screening questionnaires which are included as an appendix to this report.

All moderating was conducted by the Creative Research study directors, specifically Murray Philp or Paul Nesbitt.

Each group lasted just short of two hours, for which respondents were paid $30.00.

The content of each group, in sequence, was composed of:

- self-completion reactions to each warning letter, including the current one, based on:
  - a circling or underlining of key words or phrases considered to be important or to have a perceived positive or negative connotation;

-- completion of a rating questionnaire;

-- discussion about the letters and views of their positive or negative content.

This sequence was followed for all groups, in all cases starting with the current one (as a reference) then dealing with the four alternatives in a rotated order for each group.

After each warning letter had been reviewed, respondents were asked to rank all five based on their opinion of the merits of the letter in contributing to improved driving behaviour.

The remainder of time was spent discussing reasons for the above ranking, plus a more general discussion of the demerit point system, awareness of it and opinions of what it can be expected to accomplish.

Results

The results are presented as follows:

- Abstract Of Findings;
- The Findings In Detail;
- Conclusions: Implications & Highlights;
- The Appendix.

A Note Of Caution

Because of the qualitative nature of the study design, the reader is cautioned to view the findings as hypotheses rather than as definitive

conclusions. Although consistencies and logic lend confidence to the analysis and interpretations, there is no way of determining the degree to which the opinions expressed are reflective of the study population at large.

Certain numbers in the tables have been circled as salient or boxed as low levels of response, which are referred to in the accompanying text. This procedure has no meaning in terms of any implied statistical significance.

September 12, 1989
Study No: 218-89Q
Doc. I.D.: 756a & 763a

THE CREATIVE RESEARCH GROUP
Limited

THE FINDINGS IN DETAIL

SECTION 1: RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

THE FINDINGS IN DETAIL

SECTION 1: RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

1.1 A Brief Background About The Respondents

The first eight mini-groups in this series are designed to contrast drivers of each sex and according to age. Further details on the respondents are presented in Appendices A through D. There is an equal representation according to sex. By age, about one-quarter are younger drivers 18 to 25, with a similar proportion slightly older (26 to 34). The remainder are between 35 to 59 years of age.

About 4 in 5 of these respondents are employed outside the home, among whom occupational classification is somewhat weighted toward white as opposed to blue collar jobs. The remainder are women homemakers, or retired.

There are 7 in 10 who are married, most of whom have children.

In terms of driving background, the majority having been licensed for at least 10 years, with minority representation of more recent drivers. The composite of these eight groups divides fairly evenly between fewer kilometres per year (10K or less), a medium 10-20K level, and the heavier driver (20K+). There is no particular weighting toward city or highway driving.

Somewhat less than half of these participants have ever had demerit points. More currently, only a small minority now have points on their records, with a tendency for this to occur among younger men. Approximately 1 in 5 has had a driving accident of any kind within the past two years.

The remaining six mini-groups were conducted to obtain reactions from those who drive for a living (two groups), and to contrast lower and higher education drivers, in the context of literacy.

The vocational drivers are mainly men, who tend to be older. These people drive school buses, delivery vans, trucks, etc. Most are married with children. By definition they have considerable driving experience, and log many kilometres over a year. There is no evidence of current demerit points for these people.

The respondents selected for their educational level are a mixture of the two sexes, over a range of age groups, occupational classification and marital status. The same diversity is reflected in their driving (kilometres per year). Some have received demerit points in these groups, and a few have them on their current records.

Reference appendices A to D.

1.2 Brief Perspective On The Demerit Point System

Opinions expressed here were obtained at the conclusion of each group. There was insufficient time for a comprehensive discussion. Nevertheless a few points do emerge worth noting.

There are some drivers in these groups who are quite familiar with the details of the demerit point system -- particularly if they have points on their record or drive for a living. But most really know of the system's existence -- not its details.

> **"I think there are minor points for minor things, etc."**

This leads to the suggestion made by several that there is a need for more communication to the public:

> **"Possibly by a brochure when you renew your licence."**
>
> **"To tell me the different offences and points."**
>
> **"They used to hand out a card with your licence telling you about the points — but not anymore."**

Perceived effects or merits of the system vary, but largely reflect an opinion that it is worthwhile.

"It stops young guys from booting down the road."

"Sixteen year olds do stop to think of the consequences."

"You pay attention unless you are thick-skulled."

"No one likes to get a letter indicating they are poor drivers."

But there are limits to the effects of demerit points and of warnings about them.

"They do nothing for reckless drivers."

"Poor drivers are poor drivers."

"Demerit points are only useful for those who just slip up ... not for 'the real bad ones'."

Whatever the merits, demerit points are generally viewed as having short-term effects:

"I'd watch it for 2 or 3 months, then it fades."

"After I had an interview, I slowed down for a month or so, but then it wore off and I went back to my old bad habits."

The rationale for the demerit point system is expressed in different ways:

as a bad driver identification method

-- "to keep information"
-- "to keep an eye on you"
-- "filter out bad drivers"
-- "as punishment"
-- "to enforce the law. At a younger age I was against the (traffic) laws, but I have changed."

as a means of changing behaviour

-- "To give people a reason not to drive like lunatics."
-- "To get people to improve their driving."
-- "A deterrent — makes me drive more carefully."
-- "To get as many as possible to be better drivers."

as a contribution to safety on the roads

-- "To protect people from those who behave with wanton disregard for safety — (but how many really get caught?)"
-- "As punishment — fines are not enough."
-- "To get bad drivers off the road."
... or philosophically, "There have to be rules in society with penalties."
-- "Zero deaths is the ultimate goal."

Given the perceived limitations to the demerit point system, there are many suggestions offered under the general banner of improving driving habits:

... at the licensing stage

"make getting a licence more difficult"
"train people for highway driving"
"raise the licensing age to 18"
"test for capability in the English language"
"teach defensive driving"
"educate younger drivers"

... post licensing

"re-educate drivers"
"have a retesting program"
"teach that driving is a privilege, not a right"
"offer courses to update your driving"
"send out warning letter by registered mail"

... at the punitive stage

"close legal loopholes"
"use maximum penalties more"
"add more teeth for severe cases"
"higher insurance premiums for poor drivers"
"do what they do in Florida — a plate sticker saying you are convicted"
"tear up their driver's licence"

... and some other suggestions

> "Don't let pets sit in driver's laps."
> "Disallow car telephones."

... closer to the subject at hand

> "use different warning letters for different people"

> "how strong or threatening a letter should be depends on the nature of the driver. Personally I rebel against authority, but for others ...?"

Because of their significance to this study, some of the attitudes expressed by younger males are worth noting here:

> "I had an interview a few years ago. Personally, I think I'm a very good driver. In 11 years I've never had an accident. If I drive faster, I concentrate more."

> "The cheque I had to write scared me more than any letter."

> "After the interview I looked in my rear-view mirror more so I wouldn't get caught again."

... and a more satisfying statement:

> **"The points deter me ... how can I get to work if I can't drive."**

There is a belief that "a lot depends on how much the individual depends on the licence to make a living". Vocational drivers support this, although one non-vocational driver states that:

> **"People who drive for a living are let off."**

As the vocational driver sees it:

> **"If I lose my licence, I lose my job."**

> **"We see some God-awful accidents."**

There is a tendency to assume that poor drivers are scattered across the population. Only one or two respondents identified them as men -- probably younger.

> **"It could be anybody."**

This has benefit to this study. It helped to add realism to the letters under review -- among those with no points and with no expectation of receiving any.

Finally, one male driver complains that there is no "merit" system.

> **"Thirty-two years of driving without a demerit point — but what good is that to me?"**

SECTION 2: SELF-COMPLETION ATTRIBUTE RATINGS

2.1 Letter Length And Ease Of Reading

The results in this section were obtained from a questionnaire which each respondent completed, individually, on first receiving each warning letter. A copy of that questionnaire ("No. 1") is included as an appendix to this report.

That questionnaire simply listed a series of attributes and a five point bi-polar numerical scale for each.

Among the list of attributes, a key one measured perceived effectiveness in terms of improving driver behaviour. It is a matter of judgment as to whether it is better to place that attribute last, first, or possibly somewhere in between. In the case at hand it was placed last, with the anticipation that respondents would therefore take other variables on the questionnaire into account in responding to the last item.

It should be noted at the outset that the current warning letter is unique in always being reviewed in first position. Unlike the draft versions, the current letter had nothing with which to compare it.

Table 2.1 presents data on the ratings for length and ease of reading the letters.

The current and draft letter number 1 receive the preferable ratings for overall length of the letter (1=short). It is not a coincidence that both these versions are contained on a single page. The other three drafts carry over to a second page.

Discussions with respondents makes it clear that "length" is gauged in these terms. Further, several believe that the two page version could have been done on one page.

This is not in consideration of paper costs to the Ministry. Single page letters are preferred, "they hold your attention better".

There is a relationship in ratings between length and ease of reading (1=easy). None of the letters is considered particularly difficult to understand in terms of comprehension, but ease of reading is associated with shorter length.

There are no important variations in these findings according to sub-groups. The numerical values naturally differ, because of the qualitative nature of the respondent bases. But rank orderings are generally consistent.

Older females do tend to find letter number 4 marginally more difficult to read than the current letter or number 1.

Ratings for ease or difficulty of reading do reflect slightly more difficult comprehension for all draft letters among lower educated drivers compared to higher educated. But the differences here are too marginal to be considered of importance.

(Reference Table 2.1)

Table 2.1

Self Completion Attribute Ratings — Length, Ease Of Reading

Scores* -- Maximum 4

	(Base No.)	Letter Number Curr.	1	2	3	4
Length						
(1 Short - 5 Long)						
Total	(85)	1.3	1.4	2.7	2.5	2.5
Younger males	(12)	1.1	1.4	2.8	2.6	2.3
Younger females	(12)	1.3	1.2	2.8	2.4	2.7
Older males	(13)	1.3	1.6	3.1	2.5	2.7
Older females	(12)	1.4	1.6	2.9	2.9	2.6
Driver as vocation	(9)	1.1	1.6	2.4	2.2	2.1
Higher education	(14)	1.3	1.0	2.6	2.4	2.5
Lower education	(13)	1.4	1.6	2.3	2.4	2.6
Ease Of Reading						
(1 Easy - 5 Hard)						
Total	(85)	0.4	0.5	1.0	1.2	0.9
Younger males	(12)	0.6	0.3	0.7	1.3	1.1
Younger females	(12)	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.1	1.1
Older males	(13)	0.5	0.7	1.5	1.4	1.4
Older females	(12)	0.2	0.4	1.3	1.3	0.6
Driver as vocation	(9)	0.1	0.3	0.7	1.0	0.6
Higher education	(14)	0.4	0.4	0.9	1.2	0.6
Lower education	(13)	0.4	0.8	1.1	1.3	0.8

* Based on 5 point scale -- weights of 4 to 0.

2.2 Ratings For Being Personal, Formal, Having Writer Interest

All of the draft versions are considered more personalized than is the current warning letter. There is little difference in this respect among the four drafts.

The most informal version is letter number 1. The most formal is the current letter.

As with the attribute of being personal, all drafts are perceived as reflecting at least somewhat greater writer interest in the driver's improvement than in the current one. Greatest interest is indicated for letter numbers 2 or 4.

Based on these results, the three attributes are independent of each other.

There are some variations in rank ordering worth noting.

Younger males rate the current letter and number 2 similarly as the most formal. And they rate number 4 with number 1 as least formal.

Younger female ratings show several variations.

Personalized	Having Writer Interest
Current and number 1	number 4 -- most
-- least	Current and number 1 - least

The rating among older males for most formal are similar for the current letter and number 3. And older females tend to find letter number 4 least formal.

Vocational drivers rate letters number 3 and 4 similarly as most personalized. But they find letter number 3 the least reflecting writer interest -- and numbers 1 and 2 the most.

Among the lower educated, letter number 2 is seen as the most personalized and number 1 or 3 the least in terms of writer interest.

The higher educated share this view with respect to letter number 3 only.

(Reference Table 2.2)

Table 2.2

Self Completion Attribute Ratings — Personalization, Formality, Writer Interest

Scores* -- Maximum 4

	(Base No.)	Letter Number Curr.	1	2	3	4
Personalization						
(1 Not - 5 Very)						
Total	(85)	1.3	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.1
Younger males	(12)	1.1	1.9	2.3	1.5	1.7
Younger females	(12)	1.3	1.4	2.2	2.0	2.4
Older males	(13)	1.3	2.2	2.3	1.7	1.8
Older females	(12)	1.2	2.0	2.2	2.4	2.8
Driver as vocation	(9)	0.7	1.9	1.6	2.2	2.3
Higher education	(14)	1.5	2.1	1.9	2.2	2.2
Lower education	(13)	2.0	2.2	2.6	2.2	1.5
Formality						
(1 Not - 5 Very)						
Total	(85)	2.4	1.5	1.9	2.1	1.8
Younger males	(12)	2.3	1.7	2.2	2.1	1.8
Younger females	(12)	2.0	0.9	1.4	1.8	1.3
Older males	(13)	2.4	1.5	1.8	2.3	2.1
Older females	(12)	2.5	1.8	1.3	2.3	1.1
Driver as vocation	(9)	3.1	1.7	1.9	2.2	2.0
Higher education	(14)	2.4	1.1	2.0	1.9	1.9
Lower education	(13)	2.5	1.9	2.4	2.0	2.1
Writer Interest						
(1 Not - 5 Very)						
Total	(85)	2.0	2.3	2.6	2.2	2.7
Younger males	(12)	1.1	2.2	2.8	1.5	2.5
Younger females	(12)	1.6	1.4	1.8	2.1	2.5
Older males	(13)	2.2	2.7	2.8	2.5	2.8
Older females	(12)	1.9	2.3	2.8	2.8	3.2
Driver as vocation	(9)	2.2	2.9	2.9	2.3	2.7
Higher education	(14)	1.8	2.0	2.2	1.6	2.4
Lower education	(13)	2.5	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.8

* Based on 5 point scale -- weights of 4 to 0.

2.3 Ratings For Threat, Forcefulness, Upsetting

As will be explained in the section based on group discussion, what seems most desirable here is a compromise among these attributes.

Clearly draft letter number 3 is seen as the most threatening, and letter number 1 the least so. Between these two extremes, the current letter and number 4 are similarly rated. Letter number 2 is somewhat less threatening than is the current one or number 4.

Perceived forcefulness parallels threat in terms of the rank ordering of ratings except that letter number 2 shares with number 1 the rating as least forceful. So too does how upset the driver would feel on reading the warning letter.

A cursory conclusion from these ratings may suggest letter number 4 (or the current one) as the best compromise among the alternatives.

Results for degree of threat are consistent among all sub-groups -- with the possible exception of older males, who rate letter number 2 somewhat less threatening than number 1.

For degree of forcefulness, there is little disagreement that letter number 3 is the most forceful. Younger males see number 2 as similar to number 3. Older males add number 2 and number 3 as the most forceful.

The choice of which letter is least forceful shifts between number 1 or 2 among sub-groups. Vocational drivers, however, rate letter number 4 along with number 1 as least forceful.

The most upsetting letter is number 3 for all sub-groups. The least so is letter number 1 with only two minor variations:

-- the vocational driver and also the lower educated place letter number 4 on a par with number 1 as the least upsetting.

(Reference Table 2.3)

Table 2.3

Self Completion Attribute Ratings — Threat, Forcefulness, Upsetting

Scores* — Maximum 4

	(Base No.)	Letter Number				
		Curr.	1	2	3	4
Threatening						
(1 Not - 5 Very)						
Total	(85)	1.7	1.1	1.5	3.0	1.7
Younger males	(12)	2.0	0.8	1.8	3.5	1.8
Younger females	(12)	1.6	0.8	1.2	2.5	1.3
Older males	(13)	1.8	1.5	1.2	3.1	1.8
Older females	(12)	1.3	1.0	1.1	3.1	2.0
Driver as vocation	(9)	1.8	1.2	1.7	2.7	1.3
Higher education	(14)	1.6	0.9	1.6	2.9	1.7
Lower education	(13)	2.0	1.4	1.9	3.1	1.5
Forcefulness						
(1 Not - 5 Very)						
Total	(85)	2.0	1.8	1.8	2.6	2.1
Younger males	(12)	1.6	1.2	2.6	2.4	2.1
Younger females	(12)	1.8	1.3	1.5	2.3	1.8
Older males	(13)	2.7	2.2	1.4	2.5	2.1
Older females	(12)	2.0	2.1	1.9	3.0	2.7
Driver as vocation	(9)	2.0	1.9	2.1	2.8	1.9
Higher education	(14)	2.1	1.9	1.4	2.4	2.0
Lower education	(13)	2.1	1.8	2.1	2.8	2.2
Upsetting						
(1 Not - 5 Very)						
Total	(85)	1.9	1.2	1.5	2.6	1.6
Younger males	(12)	2.2	1.1	1.8	3.0	1.6
Younger females	(12)	1.5	1.1	1.2	2.3	2.0
Older males	(13)	1.8	1.3	1.5	2.6	1.5
Older females	(12)	1.8	1.2	1.3	2.9	2.0
Driver as vocation	(9)	2.0	1.7	1.8	2.4	1.6
Higher education	(14)	1.6	1.0	1.2	2.4	1.2
Lower education	(13)	2.2	1.3	1.9	2.7	1.2

* Based on 5 point scale -- weights of 4 to 0.

2.4 Ratings For Likelihood Of Improving Driving Behaviour

Letter number 4 is rated most highly as being effective toward the objective of improving driving behaviour although little different from number 3. This conclusion is consistent with that in the previous discussion based on threat and forcefulness. That is, it is letter number 4 which reflects a reasonable component on the dimension of threat.

The lowest effectiveness rating occurs for the current letter or number 2.

There are four sub-groups for whom somewhat different choices would be made based on this evidence:

	Most Effective
Overall	Number 4 or 3
Younger male	Number 2 or 4
Older male	Number 1
Lower educated	Number 3

For the vocational driver, there is very little perceived difference among the five letters.

Considering these variations, a case could be made for issuing different warning letters to different groups of drivers. This will be noted further in the section dealing with group discussion about the letters.

For the present it is worth noting that it is the younger male who has the highest probability of receiving a warning letter. It is that same individual who tends to be negative toward a letter which he perceives as threatening to him personally.

(Reference Table 2.4)

Table 2.4

Self Completion Attribute Ratings — Likelihood Of Improving Driving Behaviour

Scores* -- Maximum 4

1 Not - 5 Very

	(Base No.)	Letter Number				
		Curr.	1	2	3	4
Total	(85)	1.8	2.0	1.9	2.2	2.3
Younger males	(12)	0.9	1.8	2.7	1.1	2.3
Younger females	(12)	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.2	2.0
Older males	(13)	1.8	2.7	1.7	2.2	2.2
Older females	(12)	2.3	2.5	1.7	3.1	3.3
Driver as vocation	(9)	2.3	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.1
Higher education	(14)	1.9	1.8	1.4	2.1	2.0
Lower education	(13)	1.9	1.7	2.5	2.8	2.5

* Based on 5 point scale -- weights of 4 to 0.

2.5 Self-Completion Ranking Of Letters' Likelihood Of Improving Driving Behaviour

After completion of reviewing each letter, the respondents were asked to independently rank them (1 to 5) in terms of potential effectiveness in contributing to an improvement in driving behaviour. In large measure, this is the "bottom line" effect sought.

There is a high degree of consistency in rank ordering here compared to the corresponding rating for this consideration obtained after sequentially reviewing each letter. Here however, letter number 4 is clearly the highest rated.

Overall the current letter is downgraded although not quite to the extent of letter number 2 or 3.

There is by no means unanimity in these results according to sub-groups. This could again suggest the need for different letters to different respondents. However, it is important to review the reasons for opinions of these letters in the discussion section to follow before reaching that conclusion.

As these results stand, they indicate the following perceptions, with letter number 4 most frequently the best. The current letter never appears in the column headed "Best".

	Best Letter Number	Worst Letter Number
Younger males	1	3
Younger females	4	current
Older males	4 or 1	2
Older females	3 or 1	2
Vocational drivers	4	3
Higher educated	1	2, 3, 4
Lower educated	4	1

(Reference Table 2.5)

Table 2.5

Ranking — Likely to Improve Driving Behaviour

Scores* -- Maximum 4

Best - higher values
Worst - lower values

	(Base No.)	Letter Number				
		Curr.	1	2	3	4
Total	(85)	1.9	2.3	1.6	1.8	2.7
Younger males	(12)	1.4	2.8	2.5	0.8	2.4
Younger females	(12)	1.0	1.7	2.1	2.5	3.1
Older males	(13)	2.3	3.0	0.7	0.9	3.0
Older females	(12)	1.7	2.5	1.2	2.6	2.3
Driver as vocation	(9)	2.4	1.6	2.3	1.1	2.6
Higher education	(14)	2.2	2.9	1.7	1.8	1.7
Lower education	(13)	2.7	0.9	1.6	2.3	3.2

* Based on 5 rankings -- weights of 4 to 0.

SECTION 3: SELF COMPLETION CIRCLING AND UNDERLINING

SECTION 3: SELF COMPLETION CIRCLING AND UNDERLINING

3.1 Words/Phrases Of Importance Or With A Positive Connotation

During the initial reading of each letter, respondents were asked to independently circle words or phrases which were important to them, or to which they reacted to positively. Conversely, they were to underline those with a negative connotation.

The summary of these results in the accompanying tables 3.1 and 3.2 serves a useful basis for the review of free discussion about the letters to follow.

Each of the five letters contain key words which are important to drivers or to which they react positively.

Common to all draft versions is the use of the driver's name in the salutation, as opposed to "Dear Sir" as used in the current letter.

In addition, the following are the most frequent references considered to have positive or important meaning.

For the current letter, "can restore a clean record" is by far the most frequently noted. Other positive words are "obeying" and "observing".

In letter number 1 there is "only 1 in 50 ...", together with reference to lower insurance premiums and the plea "please drive carefully" ... and "preserve safety".

Letter number 2 includes "good driving increases safety", "we encourage you to obey", "you may not be aware", and "we would prefer not ...".

For number 3, there is the opening word "Warning!", "privilege to drive", and "we urge you to do so".

And in number 4, key words are, again, "Please drive carefully", "safety for yourself, family, others", "you can reduce", "Did you know", "Help keep Ontario roads safe" and references to insurance premiums.

(Reference Table 3.1)

Table 3.1

Self Completion Circling Of Words/Phrases — Positive/Important Meaning — Indicated By 3 Or More

	Letter Number				
	Curr.	1	2	3	4
Total respondents	(85)	(85)	(85)	(85)	(85)
	#	#	#	#	#
Can restore a clean record	35				
Observing	21				
Obeying	19				
Please -- drive carefully		21			32
Premiums are/lower/may be		20	15		17
Preserve safety		19			
Only 1 in 50 ...		16			
Safety for yourself, family, others		14		7	14
Did you know ...		13			15
You will be required to attend interview	5	9	6		16
Dear (full name)		8	6	9	7
Good driving increases safety			27		
We encourage you to obey ...			22		
You may not be aware			17		
We would prefer not ...			13		
More likely (to have accidents)		10	7		8
Ministry must/will keep a close watch			6		11
Driver's licence will be suspended	4	6	8	14	9
Warning!				21	
Privilege to drive				13	
We urge you to do so				11	
Show cause ... suspended				9	11
Only by obeying ...				9	3
Two years	7			10	5
You can help keep Ontario roads safe					23
You can reduce					29
Our records show					3
Driver improvement counsellor					8
From now on					6

3.2 Words/Phrases Perceived Negatively

Each of the letters also contain certain words to which these respondents react negatively. This holds more particularly for the current letter and also draft numbers 2 and 3. These are summarized as follows:

Current	Number 2	Number 3
• Avoid further action	• Regardless of the reason	• Behaviour unacceptable, cannot continue
• Mandatory (at 15 points)	• You may not be aware	• Lack of respect for the law
• Conviction	• Ministry must keep close watch	• Warning!
• Suspension	• Action authorized by law	• Danger of losing licence
• Points will remain	• Consequence of traffic violation	• If you are able to retain ... after interview
• Re-examination	• Choose to continue	• Disregard for safety
		• Show cause why...

Although fewer in number, draft versions number 1 and 4 are not free of words which are perceived negatively by some:

Number 1	Number 4
• Suspension (as in current letter)	• Ministry will keep a close watch
	• To show why
	• Required to attend ...

Before reviewing this content in the context of open discussion, it is worth noting here that two items appear on both the positive and negative lists. These are:

"Warning!" -- in letter number 3

"Did you know" -- in different positions in letters 1 and 4.

There are certain words on the negative list for which there are no apparent alternatives. These include "suspension", "conviction", "offence" and even "demerit points". It seems reasonable that the reason for drivers referring to these negatively is not an issue of choice of language. Rather it more likely traces to fear, or at least concern, about the legal aspects of poor driving behaviour.

While not exclusively so, selection of such words tends to come from younger male drivers -- some of whom resent the entire system.

(Reference Table 3.2)

Table 3.2

Self Completion Underlining Of Words And Phrases — Negative Meaning — Indicated By 3 Or More

	Letter Number				
	Curr.	1	2	3	4
Total respondents	(85)	(85)	(85)	(85)	(85)
	#	#	#	#	#
Mandatory — at 15 points	29				
Avoid further action	26				
Suspension/suspended	28	17	15	11	7
Conviction	18	4	6	5	
Points will remain	18			5	5
Re-examination	15				
Demerit points	8	4		4	4
Accumulation	7		4	3	
Offence	6				
Your driving record shows	4				
Did you know		7			7
Our records show		6			5
Regardless of the reason			34		
Choose to continue to commit violations			23	9	
Consequences of traffic violations			26		
Ministry must keep close watch			26		37
Action authorized by law			21		
You may not be aware			19		
Take action			8		
Surname first		4	4	3	6
Yours sincerely			3	3	
Dear Sir	5				
Behaviour unacceptable, cannot continue				47	
Danger of losing licence				42	
Lack of respect for law				37	
Warning!				39	
If you are able to retain...after interview				17	
Distinct disregard for safety				15	
To show cause why ...				18	19
Continue to commit				6	
Ministry records show				5	
Required to attend interview	8	6	7		13
More likely to be in accident		3		6	7
Only 1 in 50		7			
May result - lower premiums		4	4		6
Privilege to drive				4	
From now on ...					8

3.3 Discussion About The Current Letter

Although this version did not rate well compared to some of the drafts, there are some good points about it as observed by the drivers.

As already noted, (see section 2.1), it is contained on one page, which contributes to a perception of being "short", "to the point", "easy to read", clear:

> "It says what it is supposed to."

The letter contains certain words which while forceful, are not considered out of place -- "re-examination", "observing", "obeying", "suspension", "avoid further action". Such words say to some respondents: "improve or else". The reference to 9 points ... re-examination deserves underlining for some.

There is information value from the explanations of what happens at 9 to 15 points. And there is some hope offered by inclusion of the two year point clearance proviso:

> "All is not lost if you correct your driving habits."

Fundamentally, this letter is seen as a reminder, advising you that "you are not getting away with anything". It is not seen as particularly threatening, at least no more than it should be.

There are different opinions regarding the effectiveness of the letter.

Ineffective -- "It talks about your licence, not how to improve or avoid accidents."

(a younger male driver)

Effective -- "They are just telling you to slow down before you kill somebody — to smarten up before you lose all your points", "point out the error of your ways".

(older driver)

There is one respondent, speaking from experience who claims:

"I received one of these and it worked for me ... I watch my speed now."

(a 30 year old male driver)

This letter also comes in for some fairly wide spread criticism as well.

The "Dear Sir" is considered too formal, and is out of place with the "Yours truly" (which seems "almost friendly"). Use of the person's name or at least "Dear Driver" is preferred,

"To ease the tension."

"Otherwise I could claim these are not my offences."

The "Dear Sir" also contributes to this being seen as a form letter:

> "A typical government one."
>
> "They just insert the offences — by computer."
>
> "It's bureaucratic."
>
> "A bare bones letter."
>
> "It wouldn't upset me — only the cop who stopped me would."

In several of the groups, respondents volunteered that the letter is not forceful enough. These tend to be older drivers.

> "It's indifferent — sounds like an overdue bill."
>
> "It's too casual."
>
> "It should be more forceful, about the pocket book."
>
> "It lacks flow."
>
> "It's the kind of letter you look at, get mad, and file in the garbage." (a younger male)
>
> "It doesn't state its purpose, why it is sent."

There is one older man who sees the letter differently. He attributes forcefulness to the phrase, "should violations continue ...".

Descriptions of the psychological impact may not be exactly what is desired:

> "Angry", "Annoyed", "It offends me".
>
> "There is nothing positive to reach for ... guidance how to straighten up."
>
> "It says, do it or lose it."
>
> "They are pointing a finger at you ... too many yous."
>
> "They are not interested in you." ... "Just going through the motions."
>
> "It is unnecessarily strong — for 7 points."

versus "It's not serious enough."

The letter is noted as saying nothing about impact on insurance rates (as a motivation). And the last paragraph format is described as too crowded:

> "By the end you have fallen asleep."

There are two questions asked after reading the letter?

> "What does further action mean specifically."
>
> "What happens to the points after two years. Do they 'just disappear'?"

And there are three suggestions offered:

- "It should be more specific to the infractions." For example, "most accidents happen at intersections".
- "It should say how many points I have left instead of how many I have. This would make me think gee, I've only got 2 left!"
- "There should be a phone number to call if you need more information."

There are certain words, such as "convictions" or "suspension" which bother some respondents (mainly older ones) because "a conviction" is for criminals. But no one could think of more acceptable synonyms.

Although not directly germane to the purposes here, it is worth recording the general attitudes of one younger male.

> "I'd be mad as hell at receiving this. I don't like the point system, too much left to the discretion of the policeman. I think I'm a very safe driver, although I do make infractions."

3.4 Discussion About Draft Letter Number 1

Use of the recipient's name, rather than "Dear Sir" is a preferred solution here, as in all other draft versions. The only question which respondents ask is why the surname must be placed before given names.

As with the current letter this one is considered short and direct.

The point form listing is liked by several. It is easier to read, making the information stand out. This contributes to an opinion of a letter containing useful information beyond the driver's convictions.

Among the information provided the reference to "1 in 50 drivers" is useful. It:

> "Singles you out."
>
> "Ninety-eight per cent of drivers are better than me."
>
> "Says there is something wrong with me."

References to violators being more likely to have an accident and to the effects on insurance premiums are also noted as useful content.

The letter is not seen as condescending or patronizing. Rather it is indicative of more concern "in getting you to drive better".

> "It doesn't talk down to you. For example, the (current letter) says, your driving record shows. This one says, our records show."

"A little more respect from the government."

"Makes you feel more like an adult."

"It's not yelling at you."

Inclusion of "safety for yourself, your family" adds a motivating personal note, suggesting concern. It is saying:

"We can help you."

"We care about you."

There are some, but only a few, who like the opener, "Did you know."

"Most of us probably didn't know."

And the letter ends on a positive note; "Please drive carefully".

For some, this letter "gets the point across", "hits home" ... without being rude or too threatening.

"It is firm but personal."

"It's a mixture of bad news mixed with good news."

This letter may be considered to fit better for a first time offender. This thought, expressed by one older man, leads another to suggest that a different warning letter might be considered "for repeat offenders".

Letter number 1 also has its problems, however. Perhaps the most important issue is a perceived lack of forcefulness associated with this version. This view is expressed more often, although not exclusively, by older drivers:

"It is too much on the light side."

"It is too chatty — doesn't make me feel upset as it should."

"It should be more threatening."

"It's too weak — doesn't make you feel bad enough — you would forget it."

Contributing to the perception is the "Did you know" introducing the list of information. It is described as:

"Too casual."

"Making the points seem less relevant."

"Sort of by the way."

"Off-handed."

"They don't care one way or the other."

"It is just filler.", "Not necessary."

... even "sarcastic".

A suggestion offered is to change this to "for your information" or "interest".

There is one older women (but only one) who prefers a paragraph to the point format. There are more who feel that the first two points in the list, concerning 9 and 15 point action should be separated, because they are very important.

The list is also noted as failing to advise regarding the policy of cancelling points after two years.

The reference to 1 in 50 drivers is interpreted by one or two as signifying a "lot". For them, the adjective "only" implies that this proportion is satisfactory.

And there is question as to why one could have a licence suspended at 9 points. Use of the conditional tense "could" leaves an unclear impression.

Finally, one sentiment concerning lower insurance premiums is that it is "just a pitch from insurance companies". The current press regarding increased insurance rates may well be behind this minority comment.

3.5 Discussion About Draft Letter Number 2

This version may be personified as a "soft" letter. The opening phrase, "you may not be aware" is part of this. Other volunteered descriptions support this opinion:

> "It is reminding you" ... "you could have forgotten."
>
> "Not too intimidating — a friendly letter from the government."
>
> "Polite, not lecturing."
>
> "Restrained, civil."
>
> "It gets the point across without hurting your feelings."

The letter is described as "mature", "sincere", "authoritative", the sincerity tracing in part to the simple matter of signing it, "Yours sincerely". And some notice that the salutation is personally addressed.

The last paragraph referring to the benefits of good driving to the driver and family ends on a positive note which "encourages rather than pushes you."

> "It lets you save face." "Doesn't accuse you."
>
> "Like your brother or dad talking to you."

"It takes your side ("we do not want you to face ...")."

"They are concerned about my driving problems and in my well-being."

"They are not pointing a finger at you ... not saying you are a bad person."

"It says the government is interested in safe driving."

There is useful information again included, specifically references to insurance premiums, that violators are more likely to have accidents, and to the accumulation of further points and the consequences.

The sentence "Ministry must keep close watch on drivers" is considered better than referring directly to the recipient because it is not "singling you out". It also implies that "they are doing their job."

The phrase "regardless of reason" may be seen as an offset to the otherwise negative use of the word "choose" in reference to continuing violations. Yet it still conveys the idea that, "this is it".

"You better do something or face the consequences."

And the bold-face highlighting of key words is considered beneficial.

"It holds your attention."

There appears a general attitude behind those who see merit in this letter. To quote one younger male driver:

> **"If you feel mad after reading a letter, you are less likely to do something about it — just crumple it up."**

There is also a downside to letter number 2 which reflects an opposing opinion.

The reasons for this may be found in the variability in tone contained in the letter:

from: tough ("regardless of reason")
to: just doing our job ("Ministry must keep watch ...")
to: a "buddy" approach ("we do not want you to face ...").

> **"They get polite after laying it on heavy."**

The phrases "regardless of reason", or "we would prefer not", are described as "filler" or garbage. Reference to "we prefer not to take these actions" is rejected by some on the grounds that "if you violate the law, you deserve the consequences".

There are those who do find a greater degree of threat than they wish for, tracing often to younger males. Contributing words here are:

> "take action"

> "Ministry watching"

"choose to commit" ... as if "you did it on purpose", a "put-down".

There are more drivers who find the letter too soft, "casual", "not forceful enough":

"It's too gentle, like we don't want to hurt you."

"They are trying too hard to be liked."

"It is wishy-washy." "wimpy."

"It's evasive", "sort of apologizing".

There are three phrases which come in for considerable negative comment:

"Regardless of the reason"

"It means they don't care about the circumstances."

"It doesn't make any sense."

"It's vague."

"We would prefer not to take these actions."

"It's silly, because it's the law."

"It takes away from what they are trying to say."

"Makes me think they won't do anything."

or "They don't want to do it but will because they are forced to if I don't smarten up."

"You may not be aware."

"Like you are some kind of low life."

"Insults your intelligence."

"You are ignorant about your driving."

"They don't give you much credit."

"Talking to a 7 year old."

"It's stupid."

"It is something you already know."

"Maybe the Ministry is not sure either."

This letter is considered less informative than some of the other versions. For example, it fails to say when the demerit points "come off".

There is lack of clarity for some as to the purpose of the interview at 9 points.

The choice of words in the first paragraph on page 2 sounds to a few as "too much like an essay"; "old fashioned writing".

There are other phrases which are considered to be not necessary, contributing to a feeling of an overly long letter, hard to read, which could be done on one page:

-- authorized by law -- "That's obvious."

-- keeping a close watch on drivers -- which some feel is "not done" or "can't be done".

To use the words of one older respondent, this letter is "trying to appease you and kill you."

"It's trying to be personal, but it's not working."

"I'd just file it somewhere. It's not threatening enough, although don't overdo that."

There is one suggestion made that instead of itemizing demerit points lost, the letter should state how many are left.

"That would be more meaningful to me."

3.6 Discussion About Draft Letter Number 3

As seen in the ratings, (reference section 2.3), this letter is rated as the most threatening version.

There are minorities who see benefits in this -- usually those for whom demerit points are considered unlikely. The word "Warning!" in bold face is an effective way of causing the reader to "pay more attention".

> "I'd really listen with this one."
>
> "It takes a letter like this to get you to listen."
>
> "It scares you as it's supposed to."

The letter is seen as much sterner than the current one:

> "They mean business here."
>
> "They are chastening the driver."
>
> "They are letting you know they will hit you if you don't straighten out."
>
> "It is strong, but sometimes you need a kick ..."

Words which are picked out as having particularly forceful impact are, "suspended", "unacceptable", "lack of respect", and, of course, the "Warning!".

The word "losing" in the first sentence is suggested as worthy of being in bold-face. Additional words of merit are "urge you" and "privilege" ... which most see as a proper way of looking at driving, as opposed to a right.

The phrase "you are in danger of losing your licence adds further to the forcefulness of this letter.

> **"They grab you by the neck and shake you."**

There is also some positive motivation for improving found in the letter, from:

> **"For your safety and the safety of others."**
>
> **"We urge you to do so ..."**

And there is useful information provided with respect to the nature of the 9 point interview:

> **"To show why you should (or must) keep your licence."**
>
> **"To explain why you were not disrespectful of the law."**

There are more respondents who find fault with this letter on the grounds of its threatening nature:

> **"I deserve this at 12 — 15 points but not at 7."**

"They are on an attack mode."

"It's intimidating ... gets my back up."

"It is 'harsh, offensive'."

"It's very negative."

"It gives you no reason for driving well."

"It should be a warning, not a threat."

"It is rude."

"Sounds like a letter from a collection agency."

"It is ignorant — no feeling for me."

"It just makes me feel angry."

... "It puts your back up. I'd probably mail in my licence and tell them what to do with it."

The view here is that the letter should provide a positive "benefit for improving", "some hope of improving". These drivers fail to find this. Rather they see it as:

"Talking at me, not with me."

"Saying I am a bad guy instead of encouraging good driving."

"Assuming I will goof again."

"Saying I am scum."

"Threatening me like a child by saying my behaviour is unacceptable."

"Lecturing me, the way I would talk to my four year old." (reference "unacceptable")

"Containing a harshness out of proportion from the offences."

"'Ministry records show' is too much like big brother."

The word Warning! is described as "condescending" or "antagonistic":

"I'd hate to open a letter and have warning looking at me in the face — scaring you."

"From a gangster .. at least soften it by saying, 'this is a warning'."

... an after thought occurs here, however, that

"It kind of sticks with you."

"Lack of respect for the law" has a negative implication:

"It makes me out as a bad guy."

"As if I did it intentionally."

"It's a bit strong."

"Sometimes you don't realize you are speeding."

The same holds for "unacceptable, cannot continue":

"As if you like getting tickets."

"Talking down to me."

There is some ambiguity in the description of the 9 point interview:

"How do I prove I should keep my licence?"

There is also a clear misinterpretation on the part of one lower income respondent. This person perceived the reference to points remaining on the record for two years as a 2 year period of suspension!

Other reactions describe the letter as too long, and requiring re-reading to understand it. The phrase "to show cause why" bothers some in this context.

Discussion about the threatening nature of this letter causes some to suggest that different letters might be designed for different violation conditions.

As it stands, the letter:

> "Kicks you in the ass first, and then says, come on, you can do better."

3.7 Discussion About Draft Letter Number 4

This version is viewed by several as sufficiently forceful (since "abusers should feel threatened") yet presented in a more positive manner.

> "It is positive without losing the threat."
>
> "It gets the point across and still gives you some options."
>
> "It is polite yet informative of the consequences of poor driving."
>
> "It's not yelling or screaming at you."
>
> "It's more adult, reasonable."

The letter contains useful information that is well positioned:

> "The lower premium rates."
>
> "Violators are more likely to have accidents."
>
> "If you behave yourself, you can reduce your demerit points."

Even the opener, "Did you know" comes in for less criticism than in number 1 because it is considered to be better positioned -- toward the end.

And the use of the phrase "by improving your driving habits" is viewed more positively than is "by not committing offences".

Explanation of the 9 and 15 point policies is done clearly, yet not in an overly threatening manner. The use of the number spelled out followed by the numeral adds emphasis.

Positive reinforcement traces to:

-- "Please drive carefully."

-- The word "counsellor", taken to mean someone "you can talk over my problems with."

-- Reference to "the family" at the end, which can remind a driver that he or she "is not the only person on the road".

-- ... and "please drive carefully" is "a good ending".

-- "Help keep Ontario roads safe ...."

The bold-face is considered appropriate and useful.

Overall, this letter is described as:

"More thoughtful, concerned about you."

"Offering helpful ways to improve."

"Easy to digest without ruffling your feathers unnecessarily."

"Factual, without lecturing, sarcasm, or saying you are stupid."

... and it is noted as being "well-organized", "well written" with a good closing and providing a rationale as to why you should be a better driver.

Negative reactions to letter number 4 concern only two points in the main, aside from it being too long. But these two views are fairly wide-spread.

The use of the conditional "may" in referring to the requirement of an interview at 9 points is ambiguous, or wishy washy:

"Do I or don't I."

"Are names drawn out of a hat?"

"It should be black or white."

"This Ministry will keep a close watch on your driving record" is disliked. It is described as:

"George Orwell — 1984." ... "Big Brother."

"Big brother watching me."

"Fascist."

The operative word here is "your". The problem could be softened by changing "your" to "driver's", hence de-personalizing it somewhat.

The remainder of reservations are largely from single respondents:

-- "Don't boldface and underline the word "now" (last line). It is too demanding."

-- As a technical point, "you can't reduce the points on your record. Only time can."

-- In describing the interview, the phrase "why your licence should not be suspended" can be interpreted as requiring that you prove you are not guilty rather than the opposite".

-- The second page is described as "just a bunch of facts ... which we already know". Or the phrase "keep Ontario roads safe ..." is seen as too much like a bumper sticker -- over used.

The last two sentiments are not shared by others, however.

3.8 An Additional Letter

While letter number 4 is, on balance, the best of the drafts, and better than the current letter overall, this does not mean that it achieves all the goals suggested by respondents.

They also volunteer, for example:

-- containing the letter on one page;

-- a salutation stating Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____;

-- retention of the punative side of receiving more points;

-- inclusion of positive motivation for better driving;

... and a declaration of why the letter is being sent.

While the study was ongoing, the researchers began to utilize direction provided by the groups up to that point, toward drafting an additional version.

Toward the latter part of the field stage, the result was shown to the groups -- after all Ministry drafts had been reviewed. This version was presented as simply another one in the series.

There were further modifications made as a result of this exposure, although these were minor in nature.

A copy of this additional letter follows this section. In developing it, use of the positive circled components from the Ministry drafts were used (see section 3.1). But this input has not been adhered to religiously. Nor is the letter offered in light of any legal requirements to which it may be subject.

All that can be said in favour of this further draft is that it receives very broad approval among the five mini-groups reading it.

> "I like it — I'd rank it number 1 or 2 for effectiveness."
>
> "I like the turning around of the points to say how many I have left."
>
> "It's better, straight to the point."
>
> "I'd rank it near the top."
>
> "It covers all the points."
>
> "It tells me that little mistakes can kill."
>
> "It gets to you, doesn't fool around."
>
> "It tells you without saying we will put you in jail."
>
> "The insurance premiums — that hits you in the pocket book."

"It's the best by far."

... "And it's only on one page."

While the comments on balance are clearly positive, a few do not like the reference to "drivers who break the rules of the road". And one respondent dismisses the usefulness of the insurance premium benefit.

It is not always ranked at the top of the draft letters:

"It's second best to number 2."

Month Day Year

Given Name, Surname,
and Street
Town/City, Province
Postal Code

Driver's Licence Number
S 0000-00000-00000

Dear Mr. Surname:

The law requires the Ministry to notify individuals who have accumulated a total of 6 or more demerit points. Your driving record shows the following traffic convictions:

Conviction Date	Offence Date	Offence	Pts	Reference No.
01 09 87	07 08 87	Disobey traffic sign	2	59122610
03 01 88	09 12 87	Speeding 65 KMH in 40 KMH zone	3	69011348
13 02 89	01 12 88	Improper left turn at intersection	2	79160100
		Point Total	7	

You are in danger of losing your driver's licence and your privilege to drive. If you accumulate an additional two (2) demerit points, for a total of nine (9) points, you will be required to attend an interview with a driver improvement counsellor and your licence could be suspended. At fifteen (15) demerit points your licence will be suspended.

Demerit points remain on your driving record for two years from the date the offence took place. Insurance premiums are higher for drivers with demerit points. Drivers who violate the rules of the road are more likely to be involved in an accident.

You can help us preserve safety for yourself, your family and other users of our roads by obeying the traffic laws. Please - drive carefully.

Yours truly,

Head, Driver Review and
Control

173S/11

3.9 The Issue Of Developing Different Warning Letters For Different Drivers

This is a possibility put forth by some of the respondents to this study. When it was suggested, it was more often as an extension of initial rejection of some threatening or too forceful aspect of a given draft letter.

A basic issue is whether such a plan is feasible for the Ministry to do. Assuming it is, then the question becomes on what basis drivers receiving demerit point letters would most logically be segmented for different letters.

There is evidence in this study that different characteristics (age, sex, etc.) do react somewhat differently to the draft letters in terms of which is considered most effective in changing driver behaviour.

While this is true, it must be remembered that this is a qualitative study. For the purposes of designing different letters to be issued in the real world, there is question as to how dependably these results can be generalized. Further, even if the results were more concrete, as from a quantitative study, there are still likely to be exceptions in which a minority of a given sub-group could indicate some other letter than the one considered most effective by a majority.

A variable which may be more dependably generalized from this study is that of degree of threat. A not uncommon view is that a given component of this variable is viewed negatively on the grounds that it is too forceful for an individual at a six demerit point stage.

What this suggests, again if feasible, is that drivers be segmented on the basis of repeat offenders, or possibly those whose demerit points are based on more severe offences. Such a condition might then productively warrant an alternative letter containing more threat or forcefulness.

It should be noted, however, that the use of more than one warning letter is at the discretion of the Ministry. There is no compelling evidence from this study that it is essential.

3.10 The Issue Of Comprehension In Relation To "Literacy"

A test of the Demerit Point Warning letters was conducted by selecting drivers for inclusion in the study who are of higher and lower education, respectively.

Clearly educational achievement of itself is not necessarily a measure of literacy, or of lack thereof. Nevertheless, there are some differences worth noting which are found among the lower educated groups (maximum of part high school education).

In truth these are not traceable to a lack of functional literacy in the true sense of the term. Rather they concern certain words, phrases or sentence construction which cause some to pause, re-read or question as to meaning. These are symptoms of lack of clear, easy comprehension rather than being indicative of a total lack of understanding of meaning or inability to read.

Sentences which are overly long, or which contain compound clause structure are another type of problem under this general heading. Some, although by no means a majority can get lost when this occurs. They tend to say, for example, "this is ambiguous".

The following are references from the warning letters which apply here. There are very few, and even some of these seem more a question of phrasing or choice of words than of comprehension:

> Current Letter:
>
> There is nothing specific, but there is reference to this letter "lacking flow', "you have to read it carefully".

Some (one or two) do not distinguish between "obeying" and "observing" and therefore see the use of both as redundant.

Draft Letter No. 2

Some stumble over "face the consequences", suggesting that they do not connect the word with the action stipulated at 9 and 15 points, or with the references to accidents, fines and increased insurance rates.

Draft Letter No. 3

This letter is described as containing "a lot of big words in one sentence" (reference bottom of page 1 & page 2 of letter).

The phrase "show cause" is not always understood as to its meaning. And the word behaviour, while understood, can be considered as too "schoolish".

These examples aside, a more basic conclusion is that any of the warning letters are within the grasp of the lower educated to comprehend.

CONCLUSIONS

IMPLICATIONS

There is no dramatic need to revise the current warning letter. Reviewing this letter in the absence of any other, most respondents are quite approving of the letter. It is "short and to the point", and contains the formality and impersonality expected in a document from the government.

However, with some probing, a number of flaws are pin-pointed by drivers. They suggest that the current letter could be profitably amended as follows:

- replace "Dear Sir" by reference to particular individual;
- include driver's licence number for clarity and lack of possible confusion;
- add reference to monetary impact of accumulating demerit points, i.e., insurance premium consequences.

These changes are in fact part of the revised letters prepared by the Ministry. Of the four letters reviewed in this research, one is overall preferred: the fourth letter. This letter strikes a good balance between 'threat' and 'intimacy'. While a few (usually older) prefer the harder stance of letter 3, and some of the youngest prefer the softer approach of letter 2, it is letters 1 and 4 that stand above the others. Letter 1 has its advantages in terms of precision, but letter 4 is overall preferred, with its somewhat harder and softer positions - marrying, that is, the threat and intimacy elements.

It would in fact seem to be a mistake to rest with letter 4 in its current version. The various letters all have some merits, which can be profitably re-integrated. The group discussants want:

- a one-page letter;
- with identification of the recipient in a more personal manner (Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____);
- some teeth in terms of laying out consequences of gathering more points;
- some personal attention ("intimacy") in terms of suggesting the positive consequences of safer driving, and encouraging safer driving.

Also, going beyond the four drafted letters, the respondents need to be told why they are receiving this letter, that it is routinely sent after accumulation of 6 points.

It should be noted that those more particularly in one of the target groups for the letters (young males) are most likely to want to avoid harshness or threat in the letters. The older respondents, and all those feeling distant from the likelihood of receiving a letter would be happy to write a "good, threatening letter".

However, there does seem to be agreement in what would be an acceptable final product. Various revisions were shown to the groups, after the Ministry's four efforts. A sixth letter has been included in this report based on this evidence.

There is no evidence that any of the warning letters is below the threshold of comprehension for even lower educated drivers. They do need simple sentence construction, however.

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

- Based on self-completion ratings by drivers, the five warning letters reviewed are clearly differentiated for most criteria.

	Most	Least
Personalized	Any of drafts	Current
Being formal	Current	No. 1
Showing writer interest	No. 2 or 4	Current
Being threatening	No. 3	No. 1
Being forceful	No. 3	No. 1
Being upsetting	No. 3	No. 1

  - Brevity is attributed to the current letter or to No. 1 -- because they are on one page.

  - None of the letters is rated as being particularly difficult to comprehend or read, even among the lower educated.

- For overall effectiveness in improving driving behaviour, letter number 4 is rated as best, followed by number 3. The younger male, however, tends to reject number 3 because of its threatening nature, choosing instead letter number 2 or number 4.

- The more salient profiles for each letter are summarized as follows based on volunteered comments by the groups.

Current Letter

Although always seen first, hence having no comparison, it is seen:

Positively - for its brevity and for holding out some hope for driving improvement.

Negatively - perceived as a form letter, overly formal, failing to display interest in helping the driver and lacking in sufficient forcefulness (for older drivers).

Draft Letter No. 1

As with all draft letters it is an improvement because the salutation is Dear Sir, etc. It too is one page (short, direct), and the point format is largely liked. There is useful information here (reference to 1 in 50, the relationship between violators and accidents), plus an emotional appeal in referring to the family.

Its main perceived flaw is its perceived lack of forcefulness ... respectful, perhaps too much so. The "Did you know" lead makes it seem almost casual.

Draft Letter No. 2

There is encouragement to drive safely in this version, and again useful information (insurance premiums). The boldface is a useful way of highlighting.

Its principal flaw is a variability in tone, from a "tough" approach through to a friendly "buddy" style. It is described as "trying to be personal, but not working".

It shares with the remaining two letters a perception of being overly long because it extends to two pages.

Draft Letter No. 3

The main issue here is the degree of threat in this letter. Some, usually those for whom receiving demerit points is not anticipated, feel that threat is needed in a warning letter. A more prevalent opinion is that this version goes too far in this respect. And there is some phrasing which is not clearly understood.

Draft Letter No. 4

This is considered to have the best balance among the letters reviewed between forcefulness and a positive motivation to improve.

Perceived flaws include the use of the conditional "may be" instead of will be in referring to the 9 point interview. And the clause "Ministry will keep close watch" suffers from a Big Brother connotation, or is considered unrealistic.

- In addition, and as generalizations:

  -- drivers prefer a salutation which is addressed personally, rather than Dear Sir, and a letter which can be contained on one page.

-- Some suggest the inclusion of the recipient's driver's licence number, as a means of reassurance that person is in fact the intended one.

-- Reference to any monetary impact of poor driving behaviour, such as insurance premiums, have clear impact on many, at a level which has relevance to them.

-- There is appreciation for including positive direction or motivation to stimulate improved driving;

... and they wish to be told why they are receiving the letter, as part of a routine system.

- A very important consideration in selecting the most appropriate letter to achieve the desired objective is the issue of balance between threat on the one hand, and positive motivation on the other. If this study had been done among the key group represented by younger male drivers, a very likely conclusion might have been that any aspect of threat or forcefulness should be suppressed. In the opinion of the researchers, and based on views of drivers other than younger males, this could be a wrong direction to take. Younger males simply take threat more personally, because demerit points strike closer to home.

In a sense, the different groups do agree on the optimum level of threat. But the threat of each letter is a composite of the threat in the letter itself, and the perceptions (fears, concerns) of the reader. The younger group find demerit point letters more relevant to them, are more concerned about the content, and therefore find the letters more threatening.

- There is no evidence that any of the warning letters is below the threshold of comprehension for even lower educated drivers. They do need simple sentence construction, however.

Some Background - Perceptions Of The System

- There is lack of detailed awareness regarding the Demerit Point System among the driving population. A need for public communication is advocated by respondents.

  While the general view is that it is worthwhile, it is considered to have short-term effects on driving behaviour -- and no effect on those who are implicitly poor drivers.

- The role of the Demerit Point System is described under several headings:

  -- as a means of identifying bad drivers;
  -- to change bad driving behaviour;
  -- to contribute to safety on the roads.

- Judging by a wide variety of additional approaches suggested toward improved driving safety, the Demerit Point System is not considered sufficient of itself. Respondents see need for other procedures, such as more stringent testing to obtain a licence, ongoing retesting, or more rigid exercising of penalties.

Appendix A

Respondent Background — Personal Characteristics

Group Number		Number Of Respondents	Sex		Age			Respondent Occupation Among Those Employed Outside Home		
			Male	Female	18-25	26-34	35+	White	Blue	
1.	Younger men	5	5	-	2	3	-	1	4	
2.	Younger men	7	7	-	4	3	-	3	4	
3.	Younger women	6	-	6	3	3	-	3	1	
4	Younger women	6	-	6	4	2	-	3	2	
5.	Older men	6	6	-	-	-	6	4	2*	
6.	Older men	7	7	-	-	-	7	4	3*	
7.	Older women	6	-	6	-	-	6	2	-	
8.	Older women	6	-	6	-	-	6	2	1	
9.	Vocational driver**	4	2	2	-	-	4	-	4	
10.	Vocational driver	5	5	0	-	2	3	1	4	
11.	Lower education	7	3	4	2	3	2	2	5	
12.	Lower education	6	2	4	2	-	4	3	3	
13.	Higher education**	8	3	5	3	3	2	5	2	***
14.	Higher education	6	2	4	3	1	2	5	1	
Total		85	42	43	23	20	42	38	36	

* 2 retired.
** Sudbury
*** 1 student

Appendix B

Respondent Background — Family Characteristics

Group Number		Number Of Respondents	Marital Status			Number Of Children (Among Married)		
			Married	Single	Divorced/ Separated	0	1	2+
1.	Younger men	5	2	3	-	0	1	-
2.	Younger men	7	5	2	-	2	1	2
3.	Younger women	6	3	3	-	1	-	2
4.	Younger women	6	1	5	-	-	-	1
5.	Older men	6	6	-	-	1	-	5
6.	Older men	7	7	-	-	-	1	6
7.	Older women	6	5	-	1	-	-	5
8	Older women	6	6	-	-	-	-	5
9.	Vocational driver*	4	3	-	1	-	-	3
10.	Vocational driver	5	2	3	-	0	0	2
11.	Lower education	7	3	3	1	3	2	1
12.	Higher education	6	1	4	1	3	1	-
13.	Higher education*	8	5	2	1	1	-	4
14.	Higher education	6	5	1	-	4	1	-
Total		85	54	26	5	16	7	36

* Sudbury

Appendix C

Respondent Background — Driving Behaviour

Group Number		Number Of Respondent	Years Driving			Kilometres/Year			Type Of Driving**	
			5	5-10	10	10K	10-20K	20K	City	Hwy.
1.	Younger men	5	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	5
2.	Younger men	7	2	1	4	1	1	5	5	7
3.	Younger women	6	1	3	2	2	3	1	4	5
4.	Younger women	6	3	-	3	2	3	1	5	4
5.	Older men	6	-	-	6	-	1	5	4	6
6.	Older men	7	-	-	7	-	3	4	5	6
7.	Older women	6	-	-	6	4	2	-	6	2
8	Older women	6	-	-	6	1	5	-	6	3
9.	Vocational driver*	4	-	-	4	1	-	3	4	4
10.	Vocational driver	5	1	1	3	0	0	5	5	2
11.	Lower education	7	1	3	3	1	3	3	4	3
12.	Lower education	6	1	2	3	2	3	1	4	3
13.	Higher education*	8	2	3	3	3	2	3	8	6
14.	Higher education	6	1	3	2	1	3	2	3	3
Total		85	13	18	54	19	30	36	66	59

* Sudbury

** Some duplicate responses - city & highway about equal.

Appendix D

Respondent Background — Driving Record

Group Number		Number Of Respondents	Ever Had Demerit Points		Current Demerit Points			Accident Past 2 Years	
			Yes	No	0	1-2	3-5	Yes	No
1.	Younger men	5	5	-	3	-	2	1	4
2.	Younger men	7	3	4	6	1	-	1	6
3.	Younger women	6	2	4	5	-	1	1	5
4.	Younger women	6	2	4	5	1	-	2	4
5.	Older men	6	3	3	5	1	-	1	5
6.	Older men	7	4	3	7	-	-	3	4
7.	Older women	6	2	4	6	-	-	-	6
8	Older women	6	1	5	6	-	-	-	6
9.	Vocational driver*	4	-	4	4	-	-	-	4
10.	Vocational driver	5	2	3	5	-	-	-	5
11.	Lower education	7	1	6	7	-	-	2	5
12.	Lower education	6	3	3	6	-	-	1	5
13.	Higher education*	8	3	5	6	-	2	1	7
14.	Higher education	6	1	5	6	-	-	1	5
Total		85	32	53	77	3	5	14	71

* Sudbury

CURRENT LETTER

Dear Sir-

Your driving record shows an accumulation of demerit points for the following convictions-

Conviction Date	Offence Date	Offence	Pts	Reference
01 09 85	07 08 85	Disobey traffic sign	2	59122610
03 01 86	09 12 85	Speeding 65 KMH in 40 KMH zone	3	69011348
13 05 87	01 12 86	Improper left turn at intersection	2	79160100
		Point Total	7	

These points will remain on your record for two years from the date of each offence. By observing and obeying all the traffic laws and regulations you can restore a clear record and avoid further action. Should violations continue you will be required at nine points to attend an interview and driver re-examination. Suspension of your drivers licence is mandatory at fifteen points.

Yours truly,

Head, Driver Control

DRAFT WARNING LETTER #1

Day Month Year

Surname, Given Name
and Street
Town/City, Province
Postal Code

Driver's Licence Number
S 0000-00000-00000

Dear Full Name:

Our records show that you have accumulated demerit points for the following traffic convictions:

Conviction Date	Offence Date	Offence	Pts.	Reference
DD MM YY	DD MM YY	Disobey Sign	2	6000 0000
DD MM YY	DD MM YY	Speeding 67/50	3	7000 0000
DD MM YY	DD MM YY	Improper Turn	2	7000 0000

Point Total: 7

Did you know:

- at nine (9) demerit points you will be required to attend an interview and your licence could be **suspended?**
- at fifteen (15) demerit points your licence will be **suspended?**
- drivers who violate the rules of the road are **more likely** to be involved in an accident?
- insurance premiums are **lower** for drivers with good driving records?
- **only** 1 in 50 Ontario drivers has accumulated 6 or more demerit points?

You can help us preserve safety for yourself, your family and other users of our roads. Please - drive carefully.

Yours truly,

Head, Driver Review and Control

DRAFT WARNING LETTER #2

Day Month Year

Surname, Given Name
and Street
Town/City, Province
Postal Code

Driver's Licence Number
S 0000-00000-00000

Dear Full Name:

You may not be aware that your driving record shows an accumulation of demerit points for the following traffic convictions:

Conviction Date	Offence Date	Offence	Pts.	Reference
DD MM YY	DD MM YY	Prohibited Turn	2	6000 0000
DD MM YY	DD MM YY	Speeding 130 km/h in 100 km/h zone	4	7000 0000

Point Total: 6

Regardless of the reason, drivers who commit traffic violations are **more likely** to have accidents.

This Ministry must keep a close watch on driver's mistakes and take action with respect to those who choose to continue to commit violations. At an accumulation of nine (9) points you will be **required** to attend an interview, while at a total of fifteen (15) points, your driver's licence will be **suspended**.

...2

We would prefer not to take these actions which are authorized by law. Nor do we want you to face the other consequences of traffic violations namely accidents, fines and increased insurance rates.

Good driving, on the other hand, increases safety on the roads for you and your family, and may result in lower auto insurance premiums. We encourage you to obey the traffic laws and drive safely.

Yours sincerely,

Head, Driver Review
and Control

DRAFT WARNING LETTER #3

Day Month Year

Surname, Given Name
and Street
Town/City, Province
Postal Code

Driver's Licence Number
S 0000-00000-00000

Dear Full Name:

Warning! You are in danger of losing your driver's licence and your privilege to drive. Ministry records show that you have accumulated demerit points for the following convictions:

Conviction Date	Offence Date	Offence	Pts.	Reference
DD MM YY	DD MM YY	Disobey Traffic Sign	2	6000 0000
DD MM YY	DD MM YY	Speeding 67 km/h in 50 km/h zone	3	7000 0000
DD MM YY	DD MM YY	Improper Left Turn at Intersection	2	7000 0000

Point Total: 7

These points will remain on your record for two years from the date of offence. Continuing to commit violations and accumulating demerit points will result in your being required at nine points to show cause why your driver's licence should not be suspended. If you are able to retain your licence after the interview, but commit further violations, at 15 points your licence will be suspended.

...2

Committing traffic violations shows a lack of respect for the law and a distinct disregard for the safety of yourself and others on the highways. This behaviour is unacceptable and cannot continue. Only by obeying the traffic laws and driving carefully can you clear your record. We urge you to do so for your safety and the safety of others on the road.

Yours sincerely,

Head, Driver Review
and Control

DRAFT WARNING LETTER #4

Day Month Year

Surname, Given Name
and Street
Town/City, Province
Postal Code

Driver's Licence Number
S 0000-00000-00000

Dear Full Name:

Our records show that you have accumulated demerit points for the following traffic convictions:

Conviction Date	Offence Date	Offence	Pts.	Reference
DD MM YY	DD MM YY			
DD MM YY	DD MM YY			
DD MM YY	DD MM YY			

Point Total:

This Ministry will keep a close watch on your driving record. If you have accumulated nine (9) demerit points at any time, you may be required to attend an interview with one of our driver improvement counsellors to discuss your driving record and to show why your licence should not be suspended at that time. At fifteen (15) demerit points, your licence will be suspended.
Demerit points remain on your driving record for two years from the date the offence took place. You can reduce your demerit point total by obeying the traffic laws from now on.

...2

Did you know that:

Drivers who violate the rules of the road are more likely to be involved in an accident.

Insurance premiums are lower for drivers with good driving records.

You can help keep Ontario roads safe for yourself, your family and others. How? By improving your driving habits NOW. Please drive carefully.

Yours truly,

Head, Driver Review
and Control

THE CREATIVE RESEARCH GROUP
Limited

March 1, 1989
Study No.:218-89Q
Doc. I.D.: 727a

Moderator's Outline

Introduction

-- to audio-taping and observation
-- to moderator and the reason for the discussion
-- solicit participation by all respondents
-- emphasize that there are no 'right or wrong' points of view -- we are interested in your opinions
-- emphasize that the groups will be conducted in two ways
    -- mainly discussion
    -- interspersed by some self-completion work -- to be done independently

Go Around — One-On-One

-- first name
-- family composition -- number of children (singles excluded)
-- occupation of respondent/of husband/wife
-- length of time driving
-- miles/kilometres driven per year
-- Are most of these miles/kilometres:
    -- to and from work
    -- highway or city driving

Review Of The Current Warning Letter

-- Brief explanation of the subject.

-- Hand out, ask respondents to read, explaining that this is the actual letter which is currently sent to drivers receiving 6 demerit points.

-- Ask respondents on an <u>individual</u> basis, to circle any words or phrases which are in any way important to them

  -- in terms of information
  -- in terms of any positive reactions
  -- in terms of any negative reactions

  -- just as one could do for any letter received.

-- Ask respondents, again on an individual basis, to answer Questionnaire No. 1

-- Discussion
  -- Retrieve both circled statements and Questionnaire No.1

  Probe for meaning, as required, of
  -- the circled words/phrases
  -- responses to Questionnaire No.1

Review Of Draft Letters

Each of 4 to be given to respondents, in sequence (rotated order)
-- respondents asked to read each

Following distribution of each letter, a similar format will be used.

Self-completion -- word/phrase circling
-- questionnaire

Free Discussion -- reasons for liking, for disliking
-- probe for meaning -- 2 self-completions

After All Letters Are Reviewed

-- Are they perceived as different in any tangible ways? How/which letters?

-- In an overall sense, which of the letters are advocated as:

Best -- why?
second best -- why? } in terms of impacting on improved driving
worst -- why?

-- Are there any parts of these letters which should be retained -- hence inviting respondents to mix and match contents

Awareness Of The Demerit Point System

-- do respondents understand what this refers to?

-- can they describe how it works?

i.e., -- 6 points -- warning letter
9 points -- interview
15 points -- suspension
-- points maintained on record for 2 years

-- as required, explain the system, in essence

Opinions Of The Demerit Point System

-- why does it exist?
-- what are its benefits, if any?
-- how do respondents speculate on the effects of the system on driving behaviour -- are these short term or of more lasting duration, or none?

QUESTIONNAIRE No.1

Please rate this letter for each of the considerations below, based on your personal opinion. Choose one answer for each.

1. Length of the letter:

1	2	3	4	5
Very Short		Average Length		Very Long

2. Is the letter:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Personal At All		Moderately Personal		Very Personal

3. Is the style and language of the letter:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Formal At All		Moderately Formal		Very Formal

4. How interested is the writer in the driver's improvement:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Interested At All		Moderately Interested		Very Interested

5. How threatening do you feel the letter is:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Threatening At All		Moderately Threatening		Very Threatening

6. If you received this letter would you be:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Upset At All		Moderately Upset		Very Upset

7. Do you feel the letter is:

1	2	3	4	5
Very Easy To Read		Neither Easy Or Hard To Read		Very Hard To Read

8. How forceful is the letter in getting a driver to improve:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Forceful At All		Moderately Forceful		Very Forceful

9. For the purpose of improving driving behaviour do you feel this letter is:

1	2	3	4	5
Not Effective At All		Moderately Effective		Very Effective